



Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE
Medical Center Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Labor Day
Sept. 2

Savannah Stand Down Against Homelessness
The Salvation Army, 3000 Bee Rd.,
Savannah, GA 31404
Sept. 4, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Cancer Survivor Expo
Main Auditorium
Sept. 10, 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

9/11 Remembrance Day
Myrtle Beach Stand Down Against Homelessness
Myrtle Beach Armory
Sept. 27, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKES EVERYONE!

#BeThere

Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat at:
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Text: 838255



VA Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center

MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR



There are many factors that have led our VA to become one of the best medical centers in the country for quality of care both within and outside of VA. Our commitment to listening to our patients. Our culture of service that doesn't settle for anything less than the highest quality for our Veterans. And our team's tenacious spirit to find and emulate the very best practices in clinical care with a personalized patient focus.

That's what we have done with our Cancer Care program ... we looked across the nation at both public and private cancer centers to find those best practices and make sure we're providing the absolute best care anywhere for patients who are going through one of the most difficult times of their lives.

I am pleased to announce that our Cancer Care team now includes Navigators – Registered Nurses who lead our Veterans and their families through every step making sure they understand their diagnosis, treatment options and that they have every appointment or episode of care they need.

While our VA's Cancer Care program has been accredited by the American College of Surgeon's Commission on Cancer for many years – an accreditation that assures our program meets the highest national standards for comprehensive and patient centered cancer care – we were determined to do more to help our patients.

Modeled after the world-renowned MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and developed with significant input from our own patients, our Cancer Navigators are an integral part of our Cancer Care team. So much so that every Veteran diagnosed at our VA is managed by a Navigator to help them through their cancer journey.

As our first Cancer Navigator Margaret "Peggy" Leveen, RN says, patients and families don't know where to go or who to call for help when they first get their diagnosis. Her job – and the job of all our Navigators – is to help them understand every detail of their condition and their care.

The Navigator role goes far beyond patient education. These highly-trained nurses, many of whom like Peggy have cared for Oncology patients for years, know the other conditions, situations and experiences unique to Veterans that can impact their care. Their team knows how to help minimize anxiety for patients with PTSD when they are going through treatment. They see barriers like transportation for Veterans who may live a few hours away and they work with our Transportation Office to get patients to their appointments. They also work with Eligibility and the Office of Community Care to make sure all their patients' authorizations for care are completed.

cont.



1,335 FAMILIES SERVED

Simply put, their job is to do whatever it takes to make sure their Veteran patients get the care – all the care – they need all the while supporting them, answering their questions, and encouraging them through every phase of treatment.

And their job doesn't end when the patient finishes treatment. Navigators are connected with their patients for their entire life, working with them on follow-up screening plans, making sure they know who to call with questions, and helping Veterans get back to the life they want to live. And with research and treatment advances, that relationship can and will go on for many years as patients live longer.

At our VA, Cancer Care services include oncology, hematology, urology, oncologic surgery, thoracic surgery and palliative care. Our interdisciplinary team and partnership with the Medical University of South Carolina ensures our Veteran patients are treated by the most highly trained specialists with the

latest evidence-based treatments including chemotherapy, radiation therapy and immunotherapy – comprehensive care that can usually be provided faster through our VA than in the private sector.

Now, with the addition of our Cancer Navigators, our care is even better. As one Veteran spouse recently told me, "Peggy checks on my husband and me regularly. She is always just an email or a phone call away answering my questions, holding my hand, helping me help my husband get better."

At the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, we believe in doing the right thing for our patients and their families. We believe in going beyond the diagnosis. And our Cancer Care team is helping Veterans do just that every day.

Respectfully,



Scott R. Isaacks | Director & CEO



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